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SUBJECT: Somalia - TFG Deputy Prime Minister Offers View on ASWJ, TFG Finances, and al-Shabaab

REF: NAIROBI 2519

CLASSIFIED BY: Robert Patterson, Counselor for Somalia Affairs, State Department, Somalia Unit; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: TFG Deputy Prime Minister Sharif Hassan during a late December meeting with the Somalia Unit expressed cautious support for ASWJ/Galgaduud and a possible role in the TFG for former deputy Prime Minister Ahmed Abdisalaam. In addition, Hassan described TFG plans for the Mogadishu port and promised more transparent TFG finances. Hassan offered his views on al-Shabaab, Hisbul Islam's Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, and Puntland. Hassan's stated support this time around for ASWJ/Galgaduud and seeming acceptance of Abdisalaam's increasing influence in Somali politics were at variance with earlier comments he had made to Somalia Unit. They may have been the result of efforts by Somali opinion makers to nudge Hassan, long resistant to regional outreach and widely accused of corruption, in a less obstructionist direction (ref a). End summary.

¶2. (C) In a December 23 meeting with Somalia Unit, TFG Deputy Prime Minister Sharif Hassan expressed cautious support for TFG efforts to further strengthen alliances to ASWJ/Galgaduud. (Note: Hassan's had previously been much less enthusiastic about outreach to Galgaduud and the other Somali regions. Former TFG Prime Minister Ahmed Abdisalaam in mid-December told us he, other political leaders, Somali civil society, and clan leaders were working to make political changes inside the TFG that would mitigate Sharif Hassan's ability to undercut TFG outreach. (reftel a) Hassan's newfound flexibility may be evidence that he is adjusting to those efforts. End note.) Hassan said the TFG gave the well-armed faction of ASWJ in north Galgaduud USD 100,000 during recent negotiations and sent an additional USD 50,000 to north Galgaduud in support of an on-going intra-ASWJ conference there. Hassan said the TFG plans to soon send an additional USD 50,000.

¶3. (C) Hassan told the Somalia Unit, however, that the TFG needed to ensure that ASWJ did not become a rival center of power and that ASWJ should ultimately be militarily integrated into TFG forces. (Note: Hassan's suggestion that ASWJ forces should be merged with their TFG counterparts seems to be at variance with both the plans of the ASWJ leadership and with those attempting to broker a meaningful agreement between the TFG and ASWJ. Former Deputy Prime Minister Ahmed Abdisalaam Aden, who has been lobbying the TFG on behalf of ASWJ/Galgaduud, told us he thinks ASWJ should act as a type of "local police force" for the TFG but should remain based in the region where it has clan leverage. End note.) Hassan

said the TFG is providing economic support to ASWJ/Galgaduud in exchange for military support. The political arrangements would be negotiated later, he said. Hassan thought that some ASWJ figures may be given positions in the TFG. Additionally, Hassan said that Ethiopia, a long-time supporter of ASWJ/Galgaduud, had recently agreed to inform the TFG of any support it gives to the group.

14. (C) Hassan offered only lukewarm support for Ahmed Abdisalaam. He agreed that Abdisalaam should be given a position in the government, and thought that the TFG would benefit from Abdisalaam's energy. Hassan, however, described past disagreements with Abdisalaam and said that bringing him into the TFG would probably make it difficult for others in the government. (Note: We think that Sharif Hassan was most referring to himself in the last comment. End note.) (Note: Some contacts have suggested that Abdisalaam could replace the current Minister of International Cooperation Abdirahman Abdishakur Warsame. The two are from the same sub-clan, and there has been some dissatisfaction with Warsame's performance as Minister. End note.)

15. (C) Hassan said the TFG is moving toward a computerized system to manage Mogadishu port and that the next step will be to replace port leadership. Hassan told us management changes at the port are delicate and compared the situation to the TFG's recent removal of former police chief Qeybdid. Hassan said that Qeybdid,

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who retains a sizeable militia, was gradually being sidelined. (Note: Qeybdid was recently demoted from police chief to Minister of Mineral Resources and Water. End note.) Hassan said that beginning January 1 the TFG will begin to move Mogadishu port revenues through the Somalia Central Bank. Hassan said the TFG originally used the money transfer company Dahabshil because it was reliable. It was also a way to say "thank you" to the company for lending money to the TFG in the early days of President Sharif's TFG. Hassan told us the TFG had almost completely paid its debts to Dahabshil.

16. (C) Hassan told us the PWC mechanism was going well. He hoped that the success would translate into more direct contributions to the TFG from the international community. Hassan thought that the Saudis had not made good on their promise of support to the TFG because they remained upset about support they had given to the former TFG. (Note: Approximately USD 40 million was reportedly pocketed by former Prime Minister Gedi during Abdullahi Yusuf's presidency. End note.) Hassan said that President Sharif wanted to explain the PWC mechanism in person to the Saudi King. He asked U.S. help in arranging a meeting.

17. (C) Hassan thought the TFG had an opportunity to expand its influence because of divisions within al-Shabaab, which had been exacerbated by the December 3 suicide bombing. Hassan described Hisbul Islam leader Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys' trajectory as downward. Hassan appeared concerned about international community efforts to bring Aweys into the political process. He alleged that the Italians had recently arranged a meeting between Somali intelligence chief Mohamed Sheikh and the Eritreans in Rome. The Eritreans were reportedly continuing to push for negotiations between Aweys and the TFG. Hassan thought that the Eritreans were motivated, in part, by a desire to head off sanctions.

18. (C) Hassan did not think that Puntland President "Farooole" understood Somali dynamics. Hassan said that "Farooole" mistakenly does not view south-central Somali problems as Puntland problems and that "Farooole" was evidently not familiar with the TFG Charter. He thought that "Farooole" was laying the groundwork for

secession, despite the fact that most Puntlanders would reject such a move.

19. (C) Comment: Hassan's stated support for ASWJ/Galgaduud and seeming acceptance of Abdisalaam's increasing influence in Somali politics were new and may be the result of efforts by Somali opinion makers to nudge Hassan, long resistant to regional outreach and widely accused of corruption, in a less obstructionist direction (ref a). UN Somalia Special Representative can be credited with fostering a change in Hassan's approach. He followed up on meetings between Hassan and Abdisalaam in Mogadishu by bringing the two together in Nairobi, and urging that they cooperate. The addition of Abdisalaam to the TFG, if it happened, would be a breakthrough. It would introduce into the lowest common denominator TFG an energetic and agile thinker and strategist, and it would inevitably further reduce Sharif Hassan's influence on Sheikh Sharif. It would also bring into the government a powerful, more secularly-minded politician, who might counterbalance the religiously more conservative inner circle of the President.
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